

# Blessings of Heaven

Revelation 21:1-7

## Intro

A boy stood on a windy hillside, flying a kite. He continued to release the string of the kite and it went higher and higher until it was completely out of sight. One of his friends walked up and asked how he knew there was still a kite on the other end. He replied. "I know it's there I feel it tugging on the line." Like the kite, we can't see heaven with our eyes, but we feel it tugging at our hearts! Yes, God has placed eternity in our hearts. In Ecclesiastes 3:11 it says, "*He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*"

We cannot deny that deep inside every human being is the tug on our souls that there is an eternity. Even those who don't believe in God as they were facing could not deny that deep in their heart there was an ach for eternity.

The atheist Honore Mirabeau said as he was dying, "*Give me more opium that I may not think of eternity.*"

Another atheist by the name of Sir Walter Scott said on his death bed, "*Until this moment I thought there was neither a God nor a hell. Now I know and feel that there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty.*"

Many people fear the end. Many people are so afraid of death that they are emotionally unable even to ponder their own demise. They fear the pain of death, the unknown, being separated from their loved ones, and the final end of their existence. They just can't face it.

So more and more people are asking the same question that Job in the Bible posed thousands of years ago: "*If a man dies, will he live again?*" After all, what could be more fundamentally important than that?

One of my favorite declarations from Jesus comes from when He was talking with Martha about the death of Lazarus, who was her brother and Jesus' good friend. Jesus declared: "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.*" (John 11:25).

In effect, Jesus was making this astonishing claim: "There is life after death. It's not a fantasy, it's not make-believe, and it's not wishful thinking. In fact, I'll prove it to you by bringing Lazarus back to life after his four days in the tomb. And later I'll establish it conclusively by overcoming the grave myself."

There is life after death and there is a heaven. Jesus promises. And if He promises you can be assured that it is real, much more real than this world.

What will heaven be like? And what will we be like when we get there? The Bible really doesn't go into specifics about heaven. Why? Because "*What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived the things God has prepared for those who love him*" (1 Cor. 2:9). Our minds simply cannot comprehend the glory eternity and heaven. But while it's true we don't know the details about heaven, the Bible does give us a general idea. What we discover is absolutely mind-blowing!

## Chart slide

## **The 7 Blessings of Heaven**

The blessings of heaven will be difficult to describe in human language but we know it is the best and greatest place of all places. It is out of this world!

As we read the beginning of Revelation chapter 21 we learn that there will be a new heaven and a new earth. This old earth will pass away. Jesus stated that in Matthew 24:35 when he said, “*Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away.*”

Also we read in Rev. 21:2 that there will be a New Jerusalem, the Holy City, which will be the most beautiful and elaborate dwelling ever created by God.

As we look at Revelation chapters 21 and 22 I would like to unpack for you 7 blessings of heaven.

### **1. Heaven Is Centered On God**

The Westminster Shorter Catechism has as its first question, “*What is the chief end of humanity?*” And the Catechism’s answer is: “*The chief end of humanity is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*” How true. The ultimate purpose why God created humans in His own image was to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever.

All true believers will do that in heaven. We will worship, honour and glorify God and enjoy intimate fellowship and communion with Him forever.

On earth we humans have displaced God from the centre of things. In our pride we think we can do things better our way, it began in the dawn of history in Genesis 3 with the Fall. That is why the world is in a mess! However, in heaven God will be the centre and focus of His new heaven and new earth. This is beautifully pictured in Revelation chapters 4 & 5 where it pictures God on his throne being worshipped as the Creator of all things.

There are four concentric circles around the throne.

1/ In the centre of the first circle is the throne where the Father and the Son are seated, and there are four living creatures around the throne, most likely seraphim (Rev. 4:6 and Isaiah 6:2).

2/ The second circle consists of the twenty-four elders, representative of God’s people of all ages. Twelve being the number associated with the people of God; the twelve tribes of the Israelites in the Old Testament plus the twelve apostles, the foundational members of the church in the New Testament. They all wear crowns and are seated on thrones (Rev. 4:10-11).

3/ In the third circle are the millions of angels who praise the Lord, who “*is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and praise*” (Rev. 5:11-12).

4/ The fourth and outer circle is represented by “*all beings in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and in the sea*” (Rev. 5:13), they also join in praising God the Father and God the Son.

### **2. Heaven is a Place of Light and Beauty**

Our human language is inadequate to describe the glorious realities of the future life. In Revelation 21 and 22 the Spirit employs a language which helps us understand something of the beauty of the world beyond. There is no darkness because God will shine His glorious light throughout heaven (Rev. 21:24-25). Heaven is beautiful and glorious (Rev. 21:2, 10, 11); very large (Rev. 21:15-17); and made from the finest, most valuable materials ever created (Rev. 21:18-21).

### **3. Heaven is a Place of Clearer Understanding**

1 Cor. 13:12 the Apostle Paul says, “*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.*”

Humanity is surrounded by mysteries and longs for great wisdom. In heaven this longing will be satisfied completely. The mysteries of the universe will be disclosed and difficult theological problems

will be answered. But the highest quality of understanding and knowledge will be knowing God in a deeper and personal way.

#### **4. Heaven is a Place of Service**

There are people who think that heaven is a place of inactivity where one spends his time playing the harp. This is not an exact concept. It is true that heaven is a place of music however there will be work to do also. God placed man and woman in the first paradise (Garden of Eden) with instructions to care for the garden. The new heaven and the new earth will certainly not leave us without some form of task in the second paradise (Rev. 7:15; 22:3)

Jesus' statements about the faithful servants in two of his stories imply responsible activity in heaven: "*You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things*" (Matthew 25:21). Maybe there will be new explorations of God's creation to undertake. The Scottish theologian Ian Maclaren said it right when he wrote, "*Heaven is not a Trappist monastery. Neither is it retirement on a pension. No, it is land of continual progress.*"

One thing that is clearly stated is that heaven will be a place of service to God. "*His servants will serve him*" (Rev. 22:3). What form of activity this involves is left to our imagination. It is true that the Bible says that those who "*die in the Lord*" will "*rest from their labours*" (Rev. 14:13). But surely that is rest from the burdensome curse of nature which will be done with.

#### **5. Heaven is a Place of Joy (Revelation 21:4)**

The greatest pleasure experienced in this world, even increased a million times, yet would not express the joy that awaits the children of God. God loves his children infinitely more than a human being could ever muster. God has a place whose beauty surpasses all that human imagination could dream of. The greatest hindrance to our joy in this life is our own sinful, self-centred natures. However, if our lives are submitted to Jesus, he has the power to "*present [us] without fault before his glorious presence ...with great joy*" (Jude 24).

What it may be like to be so transformed that we will be without any taint of sin is beautifully expressed by Joni Eareckson Tada in an article in *Challenge Weekly*. She explains that as much as she is looking forward to leaving behind her wheelchair that will not be the best part of heaven. She said, "*I can't wait to be clothed in righteousness, without a trace of sin. True it will be wonderful to stand, stretch, and reach to the sky, but it will be more wonderful to offer praise that is pure. I won't be crippled by distractions, disabled by insincerity. I won't be handicapped by half-heartedness. My heart will join with others and bubble over with effervescent adoration. For me, this will be the best part of heaven.*"

#### **6. Heaven is a Place of Absolute Bliss**

The joy of heaven will be eternal, without end. Everyone desires a permanent state of health, peace, prosperity, pure pleasure, etc. Instability and insecurity is feared by all but the bliss of heaven is that God has promised a never-ending peace, which will never diminish in intensity. It will be a place where "*He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away*" (Rev. 21:4).

#### **7. Heaven is a Place of Blessed Relationships (Hebrews 12:22-24 & 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)**

God is a personal God who exists within himself in loving relationships between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He created us to become members of his family and to enjoy those loving relationships with him and one another forever. Through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, our self-centredness and those sins that hinder our relationships here will be removed. We will be "*conformed to the likeness of his Son*" (Romans 8:29; see also 2 Corinthians 3:18).

In that day we shall be like Christ in character; we shall see Him face to face; we shall enjoy intimate fellowship with Him and see His great and wondrous glory!

### Intimate Fellowship with One Another

By nature humans are social beings. If in this present life the social joys furnish much happiness, how much more will the glorious and amiable fellowship in heaven be. In heaven, relatives and friends will not have faults and everyone will be perfect and holy. They will be perfect in attitude and considerate of each other.

I have sometimes been asked, “Will we know each other in heaven?” The answer is YES! Moses and Elijah knew one another on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3). When Paul is giving encouragement to the Christians at Thessalonica who have lost loved ones, he tells them that when Jesus returns “*then those who had faith in Christ before they died will be raised to life. Next, all of us who are still alive will be taken up into the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the sky. From that time on we will all be with the Lord forever.*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

One of the great experiences we can anticipate will be the opportunity to enjoy relationships with people of all ages and all cultures. In this life we are severely limited, both by space and time, in the relationships we can enjoy.

H. Russell Bernard, a University of Florida anthropologist, did a study in which he estimated the number of people that most of us know. Asking 1,554 people specific questions about their acquaintances, he concluded that the average person knows 290 people. In God’s eternal family, however, we will be able to explore relationships with people of all ages and all cultures.

In John’s magnificent vision of heaven he sees “*a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language*” before God’s throne and singing his praises (Revelation 7:9, 10). How we will cope with the language differences, I don’t know, but I am certain that will be no problem!

And, believe it nor not, there will be no churches or denominations in heaven! “*I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple*” (Rev. 21:22). The joy of unhindered relationships will supersede the need for church buildings and denominations.

### **Conclusion**

Joni Eareckson Tada once wrote about her going to heaven:

“I sure hope I can bring this wheelchair to heaven. Now, I know that’s not theologically correct. But I hope to bring it and put it in a little corner of heaven, and then in my new, perfect, glorified body, standing on grateful glorified legs, I’ll stand next to my Savior, holding his nail-pierced hands. I’ll say, “Thank you, Jesus,” and he will know that I mean it, because he knows me. He’ll recognize me from the fellowship we’re now sharing in his sufferings.

And I will say, ‘Jesus, do you see that wheelchair? You were right when you said that in this world we would have trouble, because that thing was a lot of trouble. But the weaker I was in that thing, the harder I leaned on you. And the harder I leaned on you, the stronger I discovered you to be. It never would have happened had you not given me the bruising of the blessing of that wheelchair.’”

“*What is the chief end of humanity?*” “*The chief end of humanity is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*” Folks, I’m looking forward with great anticipation to continue to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever!